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SB County budget looks good — for now

By The Editorial Board, Redlands Daily Facts

Wednesday, June 29, 2016



Going into the new fiscal year, San Bernardino County is on a relatively solid footing, with a balanced budget that contributes \$62 million toward reserves. However, many challenges loom in the future and require careful attention and preparation.

The \$5.4 billion budget acknowledges considerable long-term challenges, on the revenue and expenditure sides.

“Some of the larger financial risks that could affect the budget in the future include pension costs, the implications of the minimum wage increase, sales tax volatility, potential jail and mental health lawsuits, economic uncertainty and employee recruitment and retention,”

deputy executive officer Katrina Turturro told the Board of Supervisors on June 14.

Though the county’s five-year projections assume sustained economic growth, it is recognized that such an assumption is shaky at best. “Although the weakness of the current recovery and quantitative easing may have pushed off the next recession temporarily, it would be without precedent for the economy to expand throughout the county’s entire five year forecast,” the budget notes.

This consequently poses a challenge for county government, which must proceed conservatively and plan for an economic downturn that could conceivably manifest at any time in the next few years. Such uncertainly warrants continued additions to the county’s reserves, which will be necessary to ensure the county can weather the storm in the event of such a downturn.

In addition to the challenge of planning for an uncertain revenue forecast, the county has a number of costly expenditures to prepare for. One with greater certainty is the prospect of considerably higher pension costs in the future.

The county budget currently accounts for what it calls “minimal projected increases” for the coming fiscal year, but notes the county is “currently projecting the equivalent of an 11 percent loss in the county pension system for the year ending June 30, 2016, which will negatively impact county retirement costs beginning in 2017-18.”

Less clear is what will come of a class-action lawsuit filed earlier this year by the Prison Law Office, a prisoner advocacy organization which successfully sued Riverside County over deficiencies in medical and mental health care in county jails.

The group is filing a similar lawsuit against San Bernardino County, but with additional claims that the county’s jails put inmates in jeopardy of harm from other inmates as well as excessive force from deputies. The lawsuit in Riverside County resulted in a settlement calling for a minimum of \$40 million in annual additional costs.

We hope San Bernardino County continues to demonstrate fiscal responsibility and emphasizes the need to plan for the worst.

By [Shea Johnson](#)

June 28, 2016 1:08PM

[Print Page](#)

Electronic dance shows in San Bernardino County get green light for now

SAN BERNARDINO — Electronic dance shows were given a second chance in San Bernardino County, with a measure in front of supervisors that would have terminated an agreement with Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. failing to garner the necessary three votes Tuesday.

Spurred by complaints about noise, traffic and safety from residents in the vicinity of San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore, the proposal would have cut short by a year the county's agreement with Live Nation to host up to four rave-style events annually at the venue, including the wildly popular Nocturnal Wonderland and Beyond Wonderland festivals.

The recommendation failed on a 2-1 vote with 4th District Supervisor Curt Hagman rejecting the cancellation, saying he could see it coming back to the dais if the response from Live Nation to mitigate raised issues before the agreement's organic conclusion in October 2017 proved to be insufficient. Supervisors James Ramos and Josie Gonzales were not present.

Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, along with 1st District Supervisor Robert Lovingood, voted in favor of terminating the agreement. After the resolution failed, Rutherford directed county staff to negotiate with Live Nation to reduce 2 a.m. concert end times to 11 p.m. and also to create a county task force to develop safety measures for such shows.

The notice of termination is an exercisable right of supervisors described in the 2013 contract amendment if the shows were to lead to recurrent noise violations and nuisance behavior from event-goers. There have been seven such events at the venue since the deal was signed.

Rutherford presented a PowerPoint to drive home her point: There have been at least two drug-related deaths, 99 transports to the emergency room and nearly 1,000 arrests over the last three years, she said.

"These are staggering numbers," she said. "They're very unfortunate and we can take action today to prevent them from happening in the future."

Several spoke during Tuesday's public comment period. Proponents of the festivals pointed to their economic significance to the region and the positive spotlight they shine on the county within the international electronic dance community. The county gets the greater of either \$1.4 million in rent for the venue or 7.75 percent of net ticket sales, according to a county staff report that even appeared to acknowledge the further-reaching uncertainty of halting the electronic dance shows.

"The elimination of EDS may also impact the County's negotiations with Live Nation to extend the management contract for the San Manuel Amphitheater and the level of financial guarantee," the report said. "Additionally, the County may see a loss of revenue from Live Nation for the leasing of additional space at Glen Helen Regional Park for camping or other needs during EDS events or may recognize an increase in revenue resulting from other usage opportunities."

Timothy Wagner, the general manager of the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in San Bernardino, suggested hotels in the region would suffer if the county were to end electronic dance shows.

"If we don't have the hotel room occupancy, you're cutting (employee) paychecks," he said. "That's not fair to them."

But Deputy District Attorney Douglas Poston said "it will never be enough money, it never will" as he spoke of the danger to the mostly young attendees who "routinely" abuse hard drugs during events.

"The events aren't going to go away," he conceded, "but that doesn't mean you have to sponsor them here."

Dr. Rodney Borger, an emergency physician in Colton, urged the county "to do the right thing, even if it's not in your best interest financially."

"Live Nation is not with me in the emergency department," he said.

Opponents who live nearby the venue, meanwhile, lamented the disruption to neighborhood tranquility in addition to expressing concern for public safety: Noise rattles their windows, traffic impedes their movement and, in some cases, event-goers have used yards as bathrooms.

Kim Bridgewater, a resident of Devore since 1989, described it as "chaos."

"It's intolerable and no one should have to put up with it," she said.

Matt Prieshoff, chief operating officer for Live Nation in California, vowed the company would commit to continuing to work to improve traffic, sound and safety.

"Live Nation takes all of the community concerns very, very seriously," he said, adding the company was already working on re-working stage configurations to



Spurred by complaints about noise, traffic and safety from residents in the vicinity of San Manuel Amphitheater, a proposal would have cut short a year the county's contract with Live Nation to host up to four rave-style events annually at the venue. Jose Huerta, Daily Press

limit noise levels.

Since electronic dance shows were authorized at the San Manuel Amphitheater, the number of events there have tripled and Live Nation employs over 1,200 people per event, he said, adding that Beyond Wonderland was tantamount to a \$15.5 million economic impact for the county.

Electronic dance shows are by far and away the most heavily attended events at the venue, according to the county, which said Beyond Wonderland attracted nearly 80,000 people in September. By comparison, Knot Fest, the busiest non-EDS event at the venue last year, drew just under 35,000 attendees.

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<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160628/NEWS/160629706>

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Rave-style events to continue at San Manuel Amphitheater



FILE PHOTO Nocturnal Wonderland and other rave-style festivals can continue to take place at San Manuel Amphitheater after the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors failed to pass a proposal to ban such events.

By [Joe Nelson](#), The Sun

Posted: 06/28/16, 12:01 AM PDT | Updated: 10 hrs ago

[# Comments](#)

A proposal by San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford to ban rave-style events at the San Manuel Amphitheater died Tuesday due to lack of a majority vote by the Board of Supervisors.

With supervisors James Ramos and Josie Gonzales absent and Supervisor Curt Hagman opposing, the measure proposing the county terminate its contract with Live Nation to host electronic dance shows at the amphitheater on behalf of L.A.-based concert promoter Insomniac Events failed to pass.

Instead, Tuesday's three-member board directed county staff to try and negotiate with Live Nation about ending the events at 11 p.m. instead of 2 a.m. Additionally, the board directed staff to draft an agenda item proposing the creation of a rave task force similar to what the [L.A. County Board of Supervisors recently approved](#) in the wake of the [overdose deaths of two teens](#) who attended the HARD Summer music festival at the Pomona Fairplex last August.

Ramos was out of town Tuesday on personal business, said his communications director, Sandra Maravilla. Gonzales' communications director, Diana Cansino, did not know why Gonzales was absent.

A throng of supporters and opponents attended Tuesday's board meeting to weigh-in on the issue of big money versus public safety and quality of life issues including excessive noise, traffic, drug use and trespassing that Devore residents have complained about since [electronic dance shows began at the amphitheater in 2013](#).

Insomniac Events organizes the weekend-long Nocturnal Wonderland electronic dance festivals and its sister events, including Beyond Wonderland, which are held annually at the amphitheater. Two attendees have died of drug overdoses since the rave-style events began at San Manuel Amphitheater.

Arrel Cochon, 22, of Hollywood, died after attending the inaugural Nocturnal Wonderland event in 2013, and John Hoang Dinh Vo, 22, of San Diego, died after attending the Beyond Wonderland event in March last year.

Hagman opposed terminating the contract, saying the revenue generated from the events helps other county parks and infrastructure. He wanted to give Live Nation more time to try and mitigate the issue, then revisit the matter before the contract expires in October 2017.

Devore residents were not pleased.

"We just watched how economics — money — supersedes the lives and well-being of the people," said Devore resident Karen Slobom following Tuesday's meeting.

Supporters pushing for the county to allow the events to continue said the events keep people employed and generate a nice chunk of revenue for the county.

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Matt Prieshoff, chief operating officer for Live Nation, California, told the board that prior to the electronic dance shows, Live Nation was only hosting three to five concerts at the San Manuel Amphitheater a year. That number has tripled, he said.

Along with the \$1.4 million in rent the county collects from Live Nation annually, it also has earned more than \$500,000 in the last two years from a percentage of profits from net ticket sales, Prieshoff said, adding that Live Nation employs more than 1,200 people in 10-hour shifts during electronic dance show events.

“That’s 12,000 work hours per day, per event, that you would be eliminating if you move forward with this vote today,” Prieshoff said.

Live Nation also pays the county \$17,000 to close Glen Helen Regional Park during its weekend dance festivals, which last year had a \$15.2 million economic impact on the county, including \$3.6 million in hotel revenue and \$4.2 million in taxable food and beverage sales, said Prieshoff, citing a study by Beacon Economics.

Timothy Wagner, general manager of the Doubletree Hotel in San Bernardino, said hotel reservations skyrocket when the electronic dance shows come to town, and stopping them would mean fewer work hours for the 100 people he employs.

“They need these events in San Bernardino which bring them hours for work. If we don’t have the hotel room occupancy, you are cutting their paychecks,” Wagner said.

Devore resident Kim Bridgewater told the board she was sickened that those supporting the events seemed more interested in profits and jobs than human lives and that Live Nation has known about the problems from the get-go and has failed to address them properly.

“No one is holding them accountable,” Bridgewater said following Tuesday’s meeting.

Dr. Rodney Borger, chairman of emergency medicine at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, told the board Tuesday he was asked by the Medical Society to discuss the “darker side of raves.”

On the weekends electronic dance shows are held, Borger said the emergency departments at hospitals countywide are flooded with patients between the ages of 18 to 25 suffering from adverse reactions to drugs, which overburdens medical staff already dealing with a heavy load of patients. He said one patient was an 18-year-old girl who had attended one of the electronic dance shows who was found naked in a field, unconscious.

“Live Nation or the promoters of this particular rave weren’t there with me at three o’clock in the morning when I was calling the father of this young woman to the emergency department and trying to explain to him that his daughter was found naked in a field, and to this day we don’t know if she was sexually assaulted or not,” said Borger. “This is something that shouldn’t be allowed to continue.”

Borger said the average of people who die attending electronic dance shows is one in 90,000.

“If Disneyland had somebody die every day, what would the community say?” Borger asked the board. “Would we allow Disneyland to allow people in their park if somebody would die every other day?”

Supervisors Ramos and Gonzales, should they want to terminate Live Nation’s contract pertaining to the rave-style events, can always bring the item back before the board for reconsideration, said Rutherford’s communications director, Scott Vanhorne.

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Raves at San Manuel Amphitheater can continue, San Bernardino County supervisors decide



A crowd dances at a 2013 Beyond Wonderland festival at San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore. (Getty Images)

By **Paloma Esquivel**

JUNE 28, 2016, 4:49 PM

San Bernardino County supervisors rejected a proposal Tuesday to end two of Southern California's largest raves at the San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore.

The board voted 2 to 1 to end the multi-day Nocturnal Wonderland and Beyond Wonderland electronic music festivals following protests from residents who have been pushing to end the concerts over safety, noise and traffic concerns, but the measure failed to get the three votes it needed for approval.

The county will, however, explore the possibility of ending the concerts three hours earlier.

Two people have died of overdoses since the festivals began at the county-owned outdoor venue in 2013. In March, during Beyond Wonderland, more than 200 people were arrested and 18 were taken to local hospitals, according to county records. The concert drew 63,000 people.

Matt Prieshoff, chief operating officer for Live Nation in California, which organizes the concerts, told the supervisors Tuesday that the festivals bring large amounts of money to county and local business and give jobs to local workers. He said the company is committed to improving traffic and mitigating sound problems.

A number of local business representatives, including a hotel manager and restaurant owner, also said ending the raves would have a significant impact on their businesses and workers.

But residents of Devore, a rural community of large-lot homes where many keep horses and other animals, described being overwhelmed by traffic and noise on concert weekends.

Dr. Rodney Borger, an emergency room physician at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, said patients who have used drugs during the festivals flood emergency rooms that are already stretched thin on the weekends.

“Our work is then occupied by trying to restrain and take care of and save the lives of young kids who are going to die unless you take care of them,” he said.

In September 2013, a 22-year-old man died of an Ecstasy and methamphetamine overdose after collapsing at Nocturnal Wonderland. In March of last year, a UC Irvine student, also 22, [died after collapsing](#) at Beyond Wonderland. He was later determined to have overdosed from Ecstasy.

Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who represents several communities surrounding the amphitheater, earlier this year proposed ending the raves after getting numerous complaints from local residents. She and Supervisor Robert Lovingood voted in favor of the ban on Tuesday.

Supervisor Curt Hagman opposed the proposal. Two others, Josie Gonzales and Chairman James Ramos were absent.

In addition to voting unanimously to begin negotiating with Live Nation to end the festival nights at 11 p.m. rather than 2 a.m., the supervisors also voted to begin the process of creating a task force to study the safety and impact of events at the amphitheater.

A similar task force was formed late last year in Los Angeles County not long after two young concertgoers died of apparent overdoses after attending Live Nation’s Hard Summer rave at the county fairgrounds.

Hard Summer will now take place at the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana in July.

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For The Record

A previous version of this article misstated the vote tally on a proposal to end raves in San Bernardino County. Supervisors Janice Rutherford and Robert Lovingood voted in favor of the proposal and Curt Hagman opposed it. The measure failed because it needed three votes for approval.

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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Hillary Clinton's warehouse comments rekindle Inland Empire logistic feud

Candidate's comments in Perris about jobs in the industry draw support, opposition

By Imran Ghori, The Press-Enterprise

Friday, June 3, 2016

In her second swing through the Inland area, the growth of the warehousing industry was clear to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

“Coming here I saw a lot of warehouses,” the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination said during a stop in Perris Thursday. “They look big but they don’t employ a lot of people.”

Clinton didn’t elaborate on those brief remarks, but with her comments she waded into an enduring local debate as the region has become one of the largest logistics hubs in the nation. Her campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Some supporters of the warehousing industry disagreed with her comments, saying the industry employs thousands. Others say her observation was correct and that logistics mainly offers low-paying, temporary employment.

“She’s wrong,” said John Husing, chief economist for the Inland Empire Economic Partnership.

Husing, who has worked as a logistics consultant, said fulfillment centers, such as those opened by Amazon in San Bernardino and Moreno Valley, employ more people than a typical warehouse.

“They are heavily staffed,” he said. “What she said is historically true but not in the last two or three years.”

Moreno Valley Mayor Yxstian Gutierrez said he also disagreed, saying that warehousing is bringing thousands of jobs to his city with projects such as Amazon, Lowe’s and the planned 40.6-million square World Logistics Center.

A Democrat who supports Clinton, Gutierrez said he didn’t see her comments as negative.

“She probably didn’t have the opportunity to speak to someone about how many jobs each distribution center employs,” he said.

Penny Newman, executive director of the Jurupa Valley-based Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, lauded Clinton’s statement. Her group has fought several warehouse projects, including the World Logistics Center, saying that they create traffic and pollution problems.

“It’s pretty easy to agree with facts,” she said. “That’s the reality of the warehouse industry. They take up a lot of land and provide very few jobs for that space. The quality of jobs is pretty horrendous.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Inland region had 102,970 workers in the logistics industry as of the first quarter of 2015, the most recent figures available.

The report shows that the mean hourly income for managers was \$41.71. But they made up only 1.5 percent of the workforce. The pay for the vast majority ranged from \$12.58 to \$16.16 an hour.

With 40 percent of the goods shipped to Southern California ports going through the area, logistics is a fact of life for the Inland area, former Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge said.

“You fly into Ontario, you see this sea of warehouses,” he said.

Loveridge, now the director of UC Riverside’s Center for Sustainable Suburban Development, said despite those jobs the area has ranked in the bottom among California regions in terms of income.

“The answer to increased wages and higher incomes is not to be found in logistics,” he said.

Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, who joined Clinton for her Thursday evening meeting with community members at a Mexican restaurant, didn’t view Clinton’s comments as critical of warehousing.

“It was in the context of we need a rich, diverse economy here that’s not focused on one sector alone,” he said Friday. “Because the truth is that sector does produce some high-paying jobs, but there’s a limited number. We need several sectors that produce high-paying jobs that produce several ladders of opportunity for our people.”

While the region should celebrate the logistics jobs it has, Takano said it’s true that a greater number of warehouses are automated and employ fewer people.

Much of Clinton’s discussion was focused on improving education and training so that residents can have greater opportunities, Takano said.

“The one thing we have more fully in our control is how well-skilled our work force is and how well-educated our young people are,” he said.

Takano said that will allow the region to get into higher-paying jobs in manufacturing, business, science and health.

“We need to invest and support our public schools and public university so our own students are going to fill those jobs,” he said.

Staff writer Aaron Claverie contributed to this report.

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/business/20160603/hillary-clintons-warehouse-comments-rekindle-inland-empire-logistic-feud>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Judge dismisses charges against Bill Richards in wife's 1993 death in Hesperia

By Doug Saunders, The Sun

Tuesday, June 28, 2016



VICTORVILLE >> After 23 years behind bars, penniless, alone and filled with emotion, Bill Richards emerged from the Victorville Courthouse Tuesday a free man.

San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge Lisa Rogan officially dismissed murder charges against Richards, who was convicted in the August 1993 death of his wife, Pamela, 40, at their Hesperia home. He had been sentenced to 25 years to life.

Richards' new lease on life, though, won't be without obstacles. Prosecutors vowed to continue investigating the death of his wife and said they reserve the right to refile a case against Richards at any time.

[Video: California Innocence Project Director Justin Brooks talks about Richards' release](#)

Lawyers from the nonprofit California Innocence Project have fought for Richards' release since shortly after its founding in 1999. Richards was [released from custody last week](#) at West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga and has since indulged in a life outside of prison walls, all with his legal team at his side.

"I've eaten a double-double (from In 'n Out), had barbecue at Lucille's and enjoyed a pizza," he said with a grin on his face.

Bill Richards near future is very clear in his mind. He vowed to not let this "nightmare" happen to anyone else.

"I plan on working for the California Innocence Project to do my part in freeing those unjustly incarcerated," he said outside the Victorville courthouse Tuesday. "I have no more family, they're all gone, so I am driven to not let this happen to any more innocent people."

It took prosecutors three trials to convict Richards, two of which ended in a hung jury. According California Innocence Project Director Justin Brooks, questionable evidence used by "experts" sealed the wrongful conviction.

For example, in the third trial, a prosecution expert testified that Richards' teeth matched a bite mark on Pamela's hand. It served as the key factor in convicting Richards, Brooks said.

Later, that expert admitted he was wrong, and in 2009 a San Bernardino Superior Court judge ruled Richard's conviction be reversed. But that ruling was reversed by the California Court of Appeal, a decision upheld in 2013 by the California Supreme Court in a 4-3 decision.

A change in California law, allowing expert witnesses' to recant their testimony, which could then count as "false evidence," eventually allowed Richards to go free.

The bill was signed into law, the Project petitioned to have Richards' conviction reversed, and on May 26, the

California Supreme Court did just that in a 7-0 decision.

[Video: Dr. Michael Bowers talks about his role in setting Bill Richards free](#)

For now, Richards lives in a loft in the Riverside County home of an attorney associated with the Project. His defense team is helping him rejoin society, helping him get new identification and Social Security cards, as well as medical care for his advanced prostate cancer, a condition Richards said was insufficiently treated in prison.

Helping Richards move on is crucial, Project co-director Alex Simpson said, because those who are exonerated, unlike parolees, are not entitled to transitional living or work assistance.

“The law is slow to catch up and acknowledge this issue,” he said. “We hope we can do whatever we can to try to ease that transition.”

Before he was locked up in prison, Richards, an engineer, was living in a newly built home, with cars, a savings and a loving family. Now he’s broke, his family is gone and he is going to need to assimilate into a society that is clearly different from the one he left 23 years ago.

But even with those challenges ahead of him clearly he now has one thing that many people may take for granted — his freedom.

“I just need to live my life one day at a time and look forward to a brighter future,” he said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160628/judge-dismisses-charges-against-bill-richards-in-wifes-1993-death-in-hesperia>

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By Shea Johnson

Print Page

June 28, 2016 5:32PM

Milestone reached for High Desert Corridor

Caltrans recently released the final environmental review for the High Desert Corridor, a proposed 63-mile multi-modal link between the Victor and Antelope valleys.

The state transportation agency, which led efforts during the project's environmental phase, released the final Environmental Impact Summary/Environmental Impact Report on June 20. The multi-agency initiative includes the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Authority (Metro) and the corridor's Joint Powers Authority, affected municipalities and others.

"The next phase really is shifting over to Metro and the JPA and trying to obtain funding for right-of-way and to construct the project," said Karl Price, senior environmental planner for Caltrans District 7.

The final EIS/EIR, considered a milestone in the project, addressed more than 800 comments received from both the public and various agencies during a commenting period in late 2014. Price said most of the feedback was "fairly minor."

"We did receive comments from regulatory agencies," he said, "asking us to basically show our work better in terms of the biological studies."

Of the project's 63 miles, nine are slated to be in Antelope Valley while a 33-mile High Desert segment "would extend from Palmdale to Adelanto, running in a west-east direction parallel and south of Palmdale Boulevard," according to the final environmental documents.

The three-lane freeway in each direction from 90th Street East to 210th Street East would transition to a four-lane freeway in the westbound direction between 2010th Street East and Highway 395.

"The (right-of-way) would be acquired to support an ultimate facility of possibly four mixed-flow lanes and one (high-occupancy vehicle) lane in each direction plus a high-speed passenger rail line," documents show.

Most locally, the 21-mile Victor Valley segment would "generally follow the alignment of Air Expressway, between Caughlin Road in Adelanto and Dale Evans Parkway east of (Interstate 15) in Apple Valley, and continue southeasterly as an expressway to join (Highway 18) just east of Joshua Street."

This freeway segment between Caughlin and I-15 would be six lanes wide and continue to Dale Evans as either a four- or six-lane freeway. Caltrans says right-of-way would be acquired to support a future freeway of possibly four lanes and a high-occupancy vehicle lane in each direction plus a high-speed passenger rail line.

The corridor factors in the integration of the proposed private XpressWest high-speed rail and Gov. Jerry Brown's legacy bullet train project. It would also include bicycle pathways extending 36 miles along the corridor between Highway 395 in Adelanto to 20th Street East.

Caltrans pegs as unresolved issues, in addition to project funding, a public-private partnership arrangement, release of airport land at Los Angeles/Palmdale Regional Airport and the regulatory agency-consulted development of a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan.

The High Desert Corridor was first introduced to the public in late 2010, described as a fix to lagging east-west mobility that will improve connections between regional airports, increase the efficiency in the movement of goods and address current and projected growth in the region.

Visit [Dot.Ca.Gov/d7/env-docs/docs/hdc](http://dot.ca.gov/d7/env-docs/docs/hdc) to view the final environmental documents, which also detail preferred alternatives to the project.

Shea Johnson may be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at @DP_Shea.



Courtesy of Caltrans final EIS/EIR



SAN BERNARDINO: County firefighters battle 210 freeway blaze

By [DOUG SAUNDERS](#)

2016-06-28 17:47:37



A brush fire that broke out along the westbound 210 Freeway near Del Rosa Avenue kept firefighters busy Tuesday.

Shortly before 2 p.m., firefighters could see the plume of smoke and flames running along the freeway embankment, county fire spokesman Shane Glaze said.

“We’ve contained the fire to one acre,” Glaze said. “It started at the top of the freeway embankment. The wind and heat quickly pushed the fire further along.”

Glaze said the fire was under investigation, but firefighters had the blaze knocked down with the forward spread halted within 30 minutes.

There were no reports of injuries.

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San Bernardino fire, city reach last-minute agreement



San Bernardino City Hall on Aug. 27, 2013. File photo. (Rachel Luna / Staff Photographer)

By [Ryan Hagen](#), The Sun

Posted: 06/28/16, 4:22 PM PDT | Updated: 11 hrs ago

[# Comments](#)

RIVERSIDE >> A last-minute disagreement that could have prevented city firefighters from getting \$3 million the city agreed to pay them by next week was averted Tuesday by negotiations ending half an hour after a court hearing was scheduled to begin.

City officials didn't deny that they owed the settlement, which is part of a [far-reaching agreement](#) that ended \$40 million in claims along with the union's opposition to the [annexation by county fire](#) that's scheduled to take effect Friday. The first half of settlement payments totaling \$6 million were due by two business days after that annexation — in other words, by July 6.

But the city could be held liable if the lump-sum settlement wasn't properly dispersed by the union, and so it asked for a bond to cover that liability as the February settlement agreement allows, City Attorney Gary Saenz said after the hearing in U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

"Our dilemma was that we weren't responsible for giving the money, but we could be liable if it wasn't done right, so to speak," Saenz said. "(San Bernardino City Professional Firefighters) was not able to obtain that bond."

In court, union attorney Corey Glave said the agreement stated that the union would be found in compliance with the bond language, and that the proposed bond would be accepted with a few modifications.

The union will also indemnify against any possible claims using \$430,000 that it has in reserves and the proceeds from sales of union-owned property that will be sold once city employees join the county Fire Department and county union, Glave said.

The city's bankruptcy attorney, Paul Glassman, told Judge Meredith Jury he agreed with Glave's explanation.

Jury didn't take her seat until more than half an hour after the hearing was scheduled to begin, because the two sides had requested more time to negotiate.

After hearing from Glave, she praised the parties for agreeing.

"If you had not been in the hallway talking, one of the things I was going to rule was that you had to go talk," Jury said. "That's a very good resolution, because it doesn't delay anything. Anything else might have caused the people who were supposed to get checks not to get them timely, and I am sure the people that will get those checks are waiting for them, probably waiting longer than they would have liked."

Saenz said the city had tried to reach an agreement earlier, but he was glad for the result.

Advertisement

"Sometimes, the negotiations on the courthouse steps are the most fruitful," Saenz said. "That was the case today. I think everyone wins today."

Glave declined to comment beyond what he said in court.

County fire is [on track to annex the city Fire Department](#) on Friday, with the change in personnel coming Sunday.

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About the Author



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Related

Redlands Daily Facts (<http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com>)

Redlands' city employee pay, benefits lower than Inland Empire average

Mayor says lower compensation leads to more vacancies, longer turnarounds

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

REDLANDS >> Redlands' city employees on average make less in pay and benefits than municipal workers across the Inland Empire, according to [data released Tuesday](#) by an open-records advocacy group.

The average compensation for a full-time, year-round Redlands employee was \$122,372 in 2015, lower than the \$127,730 in pay and benefits received by the average city worker in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, according to Transparent California. More than 150 of Redlands' 600-plus employees, however, earned more than the Inland Empire average in 2015.

Redlands ranks 16th on the list of 45 Inland Empire cities surveyed by the group as part of its release of 2015 compensation data for 379 cities and 42 counties statewide. The city of Corona ranks first in pay, with an average compensation package of \$164,714.

Transparent California's annual salary report surveys compensation for municipalities, counties and school districts. Compensation is defined as total wages, plus the employer cost of retirement and health benefits. It includes many forms of pay, such as overtime, holidays, longevity, bonuses, clothing, car allowances and cashing in unused vacation or sick pay.

[In 2015](#), the five highest-compensated Redlands city employees were: City Manager N. Enrique Martinez (\$371,284); City Attorney Dan McHugh (\$347,374); Battalion Chief Jim Topoleski (\$343,129); Police Chief Mark Garcia (\$320,124); and Police Commander Shawn Michael Ryan (\$301,604).

By comparison, the five highest-compensated municipal workers across the two-county region were: Fontana City Manager Ken Hunt (\$453,620); Riverside Assistant Police Chief Christopher Vicino (\$433,316); Palm Springs City Manager David Ready (\$421,222); Ontario City Manager Al Boling (\$419,640); and former Hemet City Manager Walter Hill (\$414,163), according to the group.

Meanwhile, San Bernardino County CEO Greg Devereaux received more in combined salary and benefits than any county CEO in Southern California in 2015: \$549,803. While Devereaux's base salary in 2015 was less than his counterparts in Riverside and San Diego counties, his benefits exceeded those of his counterparts in Southern California's six other counties at \$179,746.

Redlands employees may have avoided landing on the list of region's highest-paid municipal workers, but Mayor Paul Foster said the city struggles with recruiting and retaining highly qualified technical employees — such as engineers, planners and even police officers making lateral moves — because its benefits package is not as generous as those offered in surrounding cities.

“Some people say you're doing the right thing to control ongoing and recurring costs around salaries and benefits, (but) it actually turns around to hurt us,” Foster said.

Because of this, he noted, the city has more vacancies and longer turnaround for processing development projects and business licenses. The city also loses employees to other cities offering more robust compensation packages, he said.

In order to be competitive, the city at some point will need to increase those salaries or benefit packages, but Foster said he does not know when that might happen.

“We have a very conservative budget approach this year and probably next,” he added. “I don’t know what the future is going to hold. I do know if we can’t fill these jobs now or in the future it will hurt the delivery of services to our citizens.”

Transparent California also tracks “other pay,” which can potentially boost a city employee’s overall compensation by quite a bit.

Most agencies report “other pay” as just that — “other pay,” said Robert Fellner, Transparent California’s research director. But the category almost always includes items such as unused-leave cash-outs as well as car, clothing or cellphone allowances, and bonuses.

“Salary in and of itself is very misleading,” Fellner said. “You have all these special forms of pay as well as benefits you’re adding on.”

Redlands police Commander Ryan and Lt. Travis Martinez made more in “other pay” than regular pay, according to the data released by Transparent California. Ryan made \$107,501 in other pay versus \$106,026 in regular pay, while Travis Martinez made \$101,087 in other pay versus \$89,526 in regular pay, according to the organization’s website.

Looking at Redlands’ numbers, however, Fellner said nothing unusual jumped out to him.

Redlands compensation remained mostly flat from 2014 to 2015, going from \$51 million to \$52 million for more than 600 employee records. The records include everyone on the payroll, from top officials to interns and temporary employees.

Staff writers Joe Nelson and Stephen Wall contributed to this report.

URL: <http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/government-and-politics/20160621/redlands-city-employee-pay-benefits-lower-than-inland-empire-average>

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By [Peter Day](#)[Print Page](#)

June 28, 2016 1:02PM

Large sum of money found in Lucerne Valley Post Office parking lot still unclaimed

LUCERNE VALLEY — This is one package someone is sure to miss.

Two weeks ago a large amount of money was found in the parking lot of the Lucerne Valley Post Office, and no one has claimed it.

"The money is wrapped up in a piece of paper," Postmaster Debra H. Ross said Tuesday. "There are three receipts inside with the money."

Ross and her staff were hoping the person who lost the money would turn up at their office and identify the package, the receipts and the amount of cash. So far, however, no one has come in. Ross decided to contact the Lucerne Valley Leader newspaper to help spread the word and hopefully reunite the money with its rightful owner.

If anyone believes the money is theirs, they are asked to visit the post office and speak with Ross. Before Ross releases the money to them, however, they will need to tell the amount and describe other details, such as how it was wrapped and the receipts contained inside.

The Lucerne Valley Post office is located at 10418 Highland Ave. in Lucerne Valley. For more information, call 760-248-2882.



A large amount of cash was found in the Lucerne Valley Post Office parking lot, according to Postmaster Debra H. Ross. The rightful owner must identify the amount and other details in order to reclaim the money, she said. Peter Day, File Photo

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160628/NEWS/160629707>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

'National tragedy' on Inland doorstep

By David Downey, The Press-Enterprise

Tuesday, June 28, 2016



It's merely a snapshot in time — taken as it was on a chilly January morning when volunteers fanned across the Inland area in search of people camping under freeway bridges, in sprawling parks, in beat-up old cars and on the hard concrete patios of office buildings.

But the most recent survey of the two-county region's homeless population is not a pretty picture.

Sure, the numbers are down from last year because of the improving economy, officials said. Both Riverside and San Bernardino counties reported a 12 percent decline in their homeless populations from 2015.

But the area remains home to more than 4,000 human beings with no roof over their heads.

And that's just based on the ones volunteers found.

San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales, chairwoman of her county's Interagency Council on Homelessness, said probably as many were missed as were counted.

"The homeless problem is extremely significant today," Gonzales said this week. "We are dealing with a national tragedy."

Anne Unmacht, president and founder of Project Touch, a group that provides homeless services in southwest Riverside County, sees that tragedy play out every day as people walk through the door, desperately seeking help. As far as she is concerned, the problem is as daunting as ever.

"I haven't personally seen a decline," Unmacht said.

Inland numbers

According to the survey, in January there were 2,165 homeless adults and children in Riverside County and 1,887 in San Bernardino County.

About 37 percent were in shelters of some kind. Most were on the street — 1,351 in Riverside County and 1,191 in San Bernardino County.

In San Bernardino County, the homeless were most prevalent in a half dozen communities: San Bernardino, Victorville, Upland, Redlands, Ontario and Fontana.

On the western side of Riverside County, the numbers are greatest in Riverside, Jurupa Valley, Hemet, Corona, Moreno Valley, Perris and Lake Elsinore.

It would be a mistake, though, Gonzales said, to suggest the problem is limited to certain cities.

“There may be a city that has more homeless people than another,” Gonzales said. “But there is no city that does not have homeless people. Whether it be in their parks, in their alleys, sleeping in cars or occupying abandoned buildings, they have some form of homeless presence.”

The people

A growing number — close to one in 10, according to the counties’ surveys — are senior citizens who are 62 or older. The same proportion are young adults between age 18 and 24. About 1 percent are minor children.

More statistics:

Approximately two in 10 homeless people are victims of domestic violence.

More than two in 10 recently landed on the street from jails or prison.

More than two in 10 have a mental illness.

About three in 10 have serious health issues.

Special concern

Officials in both Inland counties are worried about the alarming numbers of military veterans who are living without homes. The surveys counted 100 such veterans in Riverside County in January and 92 in San Bernardino County.

Several local governments have made placing veterans in homes a priority.

Last summer, for example, Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey embraced President Obama’s national challenge to “end veteran homelessness.” Between June 2015 and January, city officials said they found homes for 89 homeless veterans.

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors participated as well, officials said, finding homes by Thanksgiving for 401 veterans identified as being homeless last summer.

The causes

There are many reasons people fall through holes in the safety net and land on the street.

“The really big driver is poverty,” said Kent Paxton, homeless policy advisor for Gonzales.

Others include divorce, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness and job loss.

“And many have a disability,” said Kim Carter, founder and executive director of Time for Change Foundation in San Bernardino.

But one need not lose employment to land on the street. Increasingly, Unmacht said, people are pushed out of homes because paychecks are losing their buying power.

“Rents have skyrocketed the last couple of years,” she said.

Unmacht also said children in foster care are walking out the door of foster homes when they reach emancipation age — 18 — and going straight to the street.

The challenge

There are places for them to go.

Mary Parks, spokeswoman for the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, said the countywide inventory includes 756 beds in emergency shelters, 292 Rapid Re-Housing Program beds that help people who just lost housing, 334 beds in transitional-housing centers and 1,538 long-term beds.

The equivalent in San Bernardino County, according to the county Office of Homeless Services?

Emergency shelter beds: 325.

Rapid Re-Housing beds: 1,093.

Transitional housing beds: 412.

Long-term housing beds: 1,098.

Still, advocates said, there's a need for more.

"The challenge continues to be to develop housing," Paxton said.

Lisa Shiner, assistant director for the Riverside County department, said the tight Inland housing market is a challenge, too.

"Overall, we need more affordable housing so that people don't lose their housing to begin with," Shiner said.

The players

Both county governments play a role in addressing the problem.

Paxton said San Bernardino County has a homeless program budget of \$9.3 million, which includes \$1.5 million that will be spent to add 112 beds at sites scattered across the county.

Parks said Riverside County has targeted \$9.3 million in federal housing money and \$1.6 million in county general fund money at the problem — and is preparing in July to apply for a \$1.4 million grant to construct more long-term beds.

Besides government entities, many advocacy groups help the homeless. For example, there is Unmacht's Project Touch in southwest Riverside County that serves Temecula and Murrieta.

Another example is Carter's Time for Change Foundation in San Bernardino, which has been working since just after the turn of the century to provide housing for women and their children who are in danger of landing on the street. She was named a 2015 "CNN Hero."

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20160628/national-tragedy-on-inland-doorstep>

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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Upland takes a new approach to homelessness

Nonprofits, government agencies join efforts to find solutions

By Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Tuesday, June 28, 2016



UPLAND >> John Combs lay on a blanket at [Memorial Park](#) on a recent afternoon when two officers approached him.

The homeless man looked up, and behind the sun-leathered face, a smile emerged. The 61-year-old propped up, adjusted his blue button-up shirt and pants.

Community resource Officers Andrew McCullough and Jacob Kirk, who towers over Combs, addressed the man by his first name.

“They’ve been helping me try to find a place,” said Combs, who through support from the officers also got a job working 20 hours a week at the local Carrows restaurant.

Combs pulled out a cigarette as he gives the officers a progress report. This is just a typical day for the officers, who since last November, have been assigned to meet face to face with homeless.

It’s a departure from just two years ago, when the city [bulldozed a homeless encampment](#). That was the year the City Council passed an emergency ordinance making it [unlawful to camp or store personal items](#) on city streets or in public places. The latter was in response to what city officials said had been a longstanding problem with homeless people leaving their belongings at Memorial Park.

At the time, critics said Upland was trying to find ways to [push the problem out of the city](#) rather than finding a solution.

[Upland Police Chief Brian Johnson](#) — who joined the department last year after serving 26 years with the Los Angeles Police Department where he worked on homeless issues in Venice Beach — has ushered in a new approach to dealing with those living on the streets.

His department is working with community stakeholders on a five-year strategic plan which focuses first on getting the homeless into shelters, ensuring they get the services they need, then finding them permanent housing.

Last year, he formed the Homeless Outreach Team, composed of two full-time police officers and one sergeant. He hopes to expand it to four officers.

“I don’t believe the criminal justice system is the approach to end homelessness,” Johnson said. “These are society issues around unemployment, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence — those are bigger issues.”

Since the program’s inception in November, the department has connected with 141 individuals. Of those, 79 connections were made this year, according to department figures. Overall, team members have helped 43

people find permanent shelter, although five have since reverted back to the streets.

The effort also includes help from volunteers, faith-based groups, as well as the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health, Johnson said.

FORMING A PLAN

When Johnson first came to Upland in April 2015, he began to put a plan and structure in place to address the issue. The first step was a community engagement and outreach piece that started with clergy and faith-based leaders.

Johnson also took it upon himself to meet with the leaders in the faith community and elected officials, such as county supervisors, to create a dialogue and understanding that this is a societal problem at the national, state and local levels.

“Homelessness is a chronic issue that we are facing as a nation,” he said.

Prior to the formation of the homeless outreach team, all the organizations were all operating independently.

“One of the reasons why I was hired was dealing with homeless in Venice Beach. I was bringing a different perspective on how we can address the issue,” said Johnson

The question then becomes, how can police work through those distinct levels of government to help. “We’ve taken the phrase, ‘We’re going to give people a hand up, not a hand out,’” the chief said. “Our job and response is to help people back into society.”

It is doing so by offering services, such as getting them into treatment and finding rapid rehousing.

For these efforts to work, the department has learned it needs to ensure it hands off the information officers gather to a caseworker.

To that end, the department has invited a case worker from San Bernardino County’s Triage Engagement and Support Teams, who will come to police headquarters and ensure any advocates and homeless individuals are aware of the resources available.

Upland police also meet with caseworkers and homeless advocates on the second Tuesday of the month. On the third Tuesday of the month, the police meet with various stakeholders to address long-term solutions.

“I’ve been one of the biggest critics of Upland PD,” said homeless advocate and Upland resident Christy Mac. “I wanted to step out of my comfort zone because I knew we have a common goal.”

In the past, Mac said, “there was an effort made to kick them out. There was not a compassionate approach.”

CHANGING BEHAVIORS

UPD’s efforts come at a price. Providing emergency housing or paying for rent is being funded through the establishment of the Homeless Outreach Foundation. The funds are raised through donations and most recently, about \$18,000 was raised at [Mayor Ray Musser’s state-of-the-city address](#). Johnson acknowledges more funds are needed.

Last summer, the Salvation Army teamed up with local advocates to start a food ministry, which takes homeless people shopping for groceries.

“The idea is we’re trying to change behavior back to what seems normal,” Johnson said. “Most people get up and they go shopping at a market or at store to get their food. Here, we ensure that homeless do not go hungry,

but we're creating an atmosphere where they take them to shop for food."

Mac, who leads the nonprofit [Ladies of the IE for Strong Communities](#), approached the department about starting a clothes washing program. She partnered with a local laundromat, which opens its business after hours on Wednesdays, to allow Mac and four homeless people to wash their clothes.

Mac recently held her first session. She not only brought quarters and soap but items so they could make sandwiches and her laptop so they could search for resources.

In the short span of that night, Mac said, she learned the issues some of the individuals are facing, and through the help of the police department, was able to get them help.

"I've been homeless more than once. Life happens, and it's a roller coaster," she said. "The more you talk to people (and) you hear their individual stories, the more you realize they can't be grouped into one solution."

TREATMENT OF HOMELESS

To properly address the issue, the Police Department started by training its own staff first. Sgt. Marcelo Blanco, who leads the homeless outreach program, did some training at the Los Angeles Police Academy.

The department will also offer professional mental health training to local advocates, so they are equipped to in turn offer support.

"It's really overwhelming at times," Mac said. "This is a learning process. There's always something that you were not expecting, but you need to figure a compassionate approach. At the same time, you have to know the line so you are not enabling them."

Any time Officers Kirk or McCullough make a new connection, they not only inform the person about various shelters and resources, they also have them fill out a form. Kirk inputs the info into a spreadsheet, which then goes to a homeless advocate who begins the work of finding the best resources.

Although Kirk and McCullough say they have established relationships with many of the homeless, they will ticket or arrest anyone if they are breaking the law.

Johnson acknowledges he has received complaints from the public about hypodermic needles in the park. Substance abuse is a problem, but not all of it is linked to the homeless at the park, he said.

Calls for service, related to homeless are going up.

2014: 1,230

2015: 1,779

2016: 2,273 (projected)

"The reason you are seeing an increase is because we started doing a better way of tracking these calls," Blanco said.

Last month, the department held a town hall meeting about the homeless at Cooper Museum, which Johnson described as a lively discussion with about 150 people expressing their concerns. Johnson said he used it as an opportunity to inform them about the police department's outreach team.

"I know the police department gets calls about all the homeless at the park, and then they hear from advocates who are trying to help them," Mac said. "The police are in a tough position because they have to work with both sides. They have to issue tickets, I don't always agree, but I understand."

A RESOURCE IN THE COMMUNITY

On any given day, there could be 10 or 30 homeless people congregating at Memorial Park.

On this visit in May, the officers ran into Donald Large, 50, who has been homeless less than a year. In January, the officers helped him find housing in Victorville.

But Large only lasted three weeks, and by May was back on the streets in Upland. On this day, he had several items sprawled out over a blanket and was making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich as he spoke to Kirk and McCullough.

As the duo walked away, the officers said they were not giving up on Large, who is a veteran.

“About every time we come in contact with them, we’re offering the services and asking them if they are ready to take that leap of faith,” Kirk said.

The duo say they try to figure out what’s the best resource for that individual.

“We’ve taken people to Banning, Pasadena,” Kirk said.

McCullough adds: “Wherever the resources are, we’ll take them there.”

But it’s not a concerted effort to ship homeless out of the city.

“We’re putting them into the program that’s best suited for them to help them through their problems,” Kirk explained.

Upland does have some local resources. For example, in May, the duo were trying to help a woman get into a rehabilitation facility in the city, but limited availability prevented it.

Another obstacle is pets. [Unfortunately, shelters and most temporary housing don’t allow pets](#) in their facilities. A volunteer with the Police Department has been in contact with a pet fostering group to see if they would be willing to assist.

“We have 10 people who have said they would be interested in getting help, but because pets are often not allowed in they won’t,” McCullough said.

When the officers first come in contact with an individual, they find out if he or she has family in the area or state.

“Family reunification is the first step, and we think it’s the important step because they need some type of support system if they start a program,” Kirk said.

The key, he said, is that a family member will accept the individual because the department doesn’t just want to buy a plane or bus ticket if the family isn’t in agreement.

As the officers chatted with Combs at Memorial Park, a woman approached McCullough.

In a matter of minutes, he learned the woman recently became homeless when her daughter moved to the East Coast. The woman told McCullough that she initially didn’t want to relocate, but was now seeking their help.

He took her information and her daughter’s.

“It took a while for us to get in the situation that we’re in. It’s going to take a while to get through the process to get some of these folks off the streets,” Blanco said.

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Homeless by the numbers in Inland Valley

By Penny Arévalo, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

On Wednesday, Southern California News Group publications and websites join media in cities around the U.S. hoping to raise awareness on the issue of homelessness, in tandem with the National Coalition for the Homeless. This effort, started in San Francisco, will include coverage discussing the root causes of the problem in our communities, highlighting local efforts to help the homeless and reaching out to find long-term solutions. Readers can help raise awareness, too, by sharing articles about homelessness on Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Please post using the hashtag #SoCalHomeless.

Number of homeless people

San Gabriel Valley: 2,612

San Bernardino County: 1,887

Number housed in homeless shelters

San Gabriel Valley: 950

San Bernardino County: 696

Number living on the streets

San Gabriel Valley: 1,662

San Bernardino County: 1,191

Number of homeless veterans

San Gabriel Valley: 142

San Bernardino County: 92

Source: Homeless counts for Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties

The portrait of Inland homelessness is complex. Money to help them and shelter beds for them to sleep in are issues. Also, the area has many military veterans and senior citizens who are looking for places to call home.

Housing

The economy is growing and generating jobs. But that's pushing apartment rents up — and pushing those who can't keep pace onto the street.

Shelters

Dozens of Inland shelters have hundreds of beds. But advocates for the homeless say many more beds are needed.

Veterans

Some people risked their lives serving in Afghanistan or Iraq and returned home. And now they don't have homes.

Seniors

A growing number of Inland homeless persons are senior citizens. Nearly one in 10 people without a roof over their heads are 62 or older. In San Gabriel Valley, 6.8 percent are 62 or older.

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/social-affairs/20160629/homeless-by-the-numbers-in-inland-valley>

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KPCC joins unique collaboration on homeless coverage



On Wednesday, KPCC listeners and readers will find special coverage of homelessness in Los Angeles County. It's part of a [first-ever media project](#) aiming to focus the public and policymakers' attention on how to solve that growing problem.

Homelessness is not a new problem here, but there are big questions facing Los Angeles, O.C. and many major U.S. cities, most importantly perhaps: Why is it getting worse?

The local economy has clearly improved from the height of the recession. [Jobless claims are down](#) by nearly half in Los Angeles County. Foreclosures have plummeted and housing prices have not only recovered, but have more than [exceeded their pre-recession highs](#) in some Southern California neighborhoods. The [urban center is flourishing](#), as is Silicon Beach.

Yet our [homeless population has swelled](#), right alongside the region's property values. The largest unsheltered homeless population in the nation is right here in Los Angeles.

In January, volunteers counted up [nearly 47,000 homeless people](#), some of whom were packed into shelters, but tens of thousands more were scattered under freeways, in alleyways and park benches across Los Angeles County. That's about 12,000 more people than live in the city of Beverly Hills (roughly 35,000).

As [we reported Monday](#), more families and women are slipping into homelessness. For the first time in its 125-year history, women and children outnumber single men at the Union Rescue Mission's shelters.

And Los Angeles is by no means alone.

Frustrated by what seemed like government inaction, forward-looking media directors in San Francisco [decided to band together](#) to blanket their airwaves, websites and social media feeds with coverage on the homeless for one week – culminating in a day of news this Wednesday.

Spearheaded by the San Francisco Chronicle and KQED, the [SF Homeless Project](#) has swelled to about 70 news organizations.

Among the stories and conversations you'll hear on our air, read on KPCC's website or [check out on our app](#):

- [AirTalk](#) will hold a one-hour discussion on the causes of and some workable solutions to homelessness that will include Los Angeles city and county policymakers, advocates and the formerly homeless. (Add [your questions about the issue here](#).)
- On Morning Edition and All Things Considered, we'll air a story about one community's decision to throw money at the problem – and how that's working.
- [KPCC recent Orange County discussion](#) on the challenges of housing the homeless is available on our website.

You'll also hear and read other stories throughout the day.

This collaboration is one small part of KPCC's commitment to public service programming, which features deep coverage by beat reporters of some of the most pressing issues facing Southern Californians today, including: the housing shortage, gridlock and public transit, our growing homeless population and the efforts to help them, a fifth year of drought, fire risk and other environmental hazards, the first signs of rising crime, our crumbling infrastructure, safety, quality and equity in our health care system, struggling public schools and the promise and challenges of becoming a majority-minority region.

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EDITORIAL: Helping homeless

2016-06-28 17:36:21

The numbers don't tell the story of homelessness – though there are the numbers. In Los Angeles County, an estimated 46,874 people on any given night. Orange County, 4,452. Riverside County, 2,470. San Bernardino County, 2,140.

But numbers, in this sense, are an abstraction. No, the story is told every day within us because of what Southern Californians see with our own eyes: The bedraggled man pushing a shopping cart in front of your office. The encampments under almost every freeway overpass. The panhandling woman with her handmade sign meant to soften the blow: "Smiles also accepted." The panhandling man with the sign that softens no blows: "Homeless vet."

And even for those who don't often get to downtown Los Angeles, ground zero for the human disaster, we have all seen the photographs of Skid Row, where these sorry days hundreds of tents line the sidewalks for city block after block, temporary quarters for those with nowhere else to go, people who just like us have, or had, a mother, a father, siblings and friends, born into a world with its infinite possibilities, including a long, happy, fulfilling life.

Instead they are living out a human tragedy.

This is not a moment for a mere shaking of the head or throwing up of hands by those who have escaped their plight: Severe mental illness, chronic alcoholism, PTSD, sheer bad luck. There but for fortune go the rest of us. It is on we the fortunate ones to find solutions.

Today the Southern California News Group joins local radio stations KCRW and KPCC and a host of news outlets in the Bay Area to focus our coverage on the homeless. Journalists can do the numbers and tell compelling stories. We can't solve the problem. But we can point in the right directions:

- Build more housing – including affordable housing – and preserve existing stock. We can't build our way out of the problem if all new construction is luxury condos.
- Adopt the "Housing First" philosophy. Well-intentioned efforts to require absolute sobriety before those on the street are given a room often backfire. When people have a roof over their heads, sobriety comes more easily.
- Ease onerous and unnecessary zoning restrictions, including against the backyard second units colloquially referred to as granny flats.
- Redirect existing taxpayer dollars. Provide low-cost loans for construction. Work with nonprofits to greatly expand single-room occupancy housing. Fund mental-health services. The \$2 billion bond proposal for housing the mentally ill, with compromise language from both Democratic and Republican state Senate leaders announced Monday, is a big step. Special new fees such as the proposed Los Angeles city tax on those making more than \$1 million a year are more problematic. That tax alone on job-creators won't help. Push officials to be more efficient elsewhere and partner with non-government service providers who have expertise in these areas.
- The most important new work against homelessness can be philanthropic. Give money, food and clothing to the shelters in your community, or volunteer there. Lobby nonprofits you work with to put energy and money into the effort. We all see the problem. It is up to us individually and collectively to be a part of the solution.



RIVERSIDE: New effort seeks to hire the homeless

By [ALICIA ROBINSON](#)

2016-06-28 18:01:17



Every morning, the first thing Faith Lindsey does is clean up after her pit bull, Buttercup.

Then she takes a plastic bag and a pair of latex gloves and circles the yard, looking for garbage to pick up.

It's only a temporary home for Lindsey, 29, but she knows it reflects on the neighborhood and wants it to look good. She's one of a handful of clients at Riverside's emergency homeless shelter who have been tidying up their cul-de-sac in exchange for bus passes and gift cards to buy groceries, clothes and other items.

It's a small start, but Riverside officials are working on something bigger: a pilot program to pair housing help with hands-on job training, interviews and – officials hope – permanent jobs.

"Our ultimate goal is to help these individuals get off the streets," Riverside's Housing Project Manager Michelle Davis said. "If there's businesses out there that are willing to at least give somebody the opportunity to get their foot in the door with an interview, we would love to hear from them."

Experts say job programs aren't a universal solution to homelessness, because it's a complex issue that's only sometimes caused by lack of employment, and not everyone who is homeless can work. But for those who are able, a job can be critical to helping them find or stay in a home.

A small percentage of homeless, such as veterans and the disabled, may qualify for ongoing subsidies that pay for housing, said Nan Roman, president of the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

"Most people are going to need a job," she said.

HOUSING: [New funding for homeless veterans](#)

HELP WANTED

It's unclear how many homeless or recently housed people are working or looking for work, because federal agencies that deal with jobs and the homeless don't have comprehensive statistics.

While there aren't solid numbers on employment programs serving the homeless, "It's not nearly enough to meet the demand" for such programs, said Chris Warland of the Heartland Alliance, a Chicago-based organization that provides services aimed at ending poverty.

In the Inland area, Temecula nonprofit Project Touch provides clients with a list of businesses that are hiring and helps them get to job

interviews, founder Anne Unmacht said. It also employs clients to run its winter shelter.

Valley Restart, which runs an emergency shelter in Hemet, requires clients to look for jobs daily but relies on other agencies, such as Riverside County Workforce Development, to help people with online applications and other assistance, Executive Director Linda Rogers said.

San Bernardino City Councilwoman Virginia Marquez said Riverside's program sounds innovative and like something she might like her city to try. Next month she'll propose that San Bernardino hire a homeless services specialist who could work on such ideas.

NEW PROGRAM

At the Riverside Access Center on Hulen Place, a city-run hub for homeless services, officials wanted to help more directly.

The center is next door to the emergency shelter, and people who couldn't get a bed or didn't want to follow the shelter rules were camping on the street and leaving a mess. So Monica Sapien, the city's homeless services coordinator, started offering McDonald's gift cards and bus passes to people to tidy up.

Churches and charities hand out food on the weekends, and some people simply leave their trash on the ground, Lindsey said as she picked plastic food wrappers and a crushed milk carton out of the bushes on a recent day.

Before the cleanups started, "It looked like skid row," she said. "People judge off that."

The program helped clients of the shelter and access center feel invested in the neighborhood, and it encouraged the city to create a program that would offer participants more than a few gift cards, said Davis, the housing manager.

Officials hope to launch it this fall. The program will start by hiring about five homeless people to do landscaping and clean up around the Hulen Place campus. Others will get hands-on training and, in some cases, jobs through partnerships with Goodwill and local businesses. The city will also help them get housing, learn life skills and get other needed services.

When Riverside businessman John Plocher held a meeting in May to drum up interest in the city's new program, people from about 35 local companies came and all were interested in helping somehow, he said.

"Most of us feel helpless because we don't know what to do," Plocher said. "We can give \$5 on the street, but that's really only putting a band-aid on a serious problem."

JOBS MATTER

Experts say programs like the one Riverside is developing have succeeded, though they also stress that housing should be part of the picture.

Riverside and many other communities have or are moving toward a "housing first" philosophy, which means advocates work to get people off the street or out of a shelter before focusing on other issues, such as drug abuse treatment.

But it can be a catch-22 – it's hard to get a job without housing and hard to get housing without a job, said Roman of the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

"The two really fit together and the more successful programs are addressing both."

Lindsey, who grew up in group homes in Moreno Valley and Colton and has been homeless for 10 years, hopes to get into a duplex with her boyfriend and their dogs. She also would love a permanent job, she said, maybe at Riverside's access center or working with animals at the Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center in the city.

"Every homeless person's not alcoholics or drug addicts," she said. "There's some that want to do something with their life. I do."

RELATED

RIVERSIDE: [Homeless veterans get new lives](#)

RIVERSIDE: [City wants to house all homeless veterans](#)**BY THE NUMBERS****2,165**

Homeless people in Riverside County

1,887

Homeless people in San Bernardino County

814

In Riverside County shelters

696

In San Bernardino County shelters

1,351

Living on Riverside County streets

1,191

Living on San Bernardino County streets

100

Homeless veterans in Riverside County

92

Homeless veterans in San Bernardino County

SOURCE: County surveys done in January

Contact the writer: 951-368-9461 or arobinson@pe.com

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SAN BERNARDINO: City attempts to clear homeless from park

By [RYAN HAGEN](#)

2016-06-29 06:46:33



The man called Preacher — his parents gave him the name Gabriel Gonzales, he says — is quick to tell passers-by he's not homeless by choice. Not his own choice, anyway.

"God sent me to live with the homeless because that's what he would do," said Gonzales, adjusting a black baseball cap bearing a cross. ["Hebrews 13: 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.'"](#)

Gonzales, who said he was born 64 years ago in San Bernardino and left his apartment here two months ago, most of the homeless people camped out there, days after the city last forced them to leave, would

prosper if only the city worked with them and gave them jobs, like painting houses, he says.

RELATED [Southern California News Group sites raise awareness of issues with homelessness](#)

"Kicking us out is awful!" Gonzales said. "Where else can they (homeless people) go?" He added that residents he's talked to don't mind the homeless.

But city officials say many people do mind the homeless occupying the parks, that they make potential visitors uncomfortable and discourage the kind of investment that's needed to eventually turn the city around.

In April and May alone, residents submitted 22 complaints about homeless encampments, Lt. Rich Lawhead told the City Council last week.

And that's why the city is now doing something about it, through a Quality of Life Team that consists of five employees from the Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments, a Burrtec worker and two police officers, Lawhead said. Illegal homeless encampments are one of several focuses for the team, which hauled away 102 tons of illegally dumped trash during that same two-month period, Lawhead said.

Residents voiced their support after Lawhead spoke.

"This is what we need to turn San Bernardino around," said Darren Espiritu, who is also a parks commissioner.

But other residents are wary, including Inez White, who said she was homeless until a kind stranger allowed her to live with him and guided her through job applications a few years ago.

"I go down there as often as possible and give them food and drinks," White said, acknowledging the city discourages that in favor of giving to organizations. "When I was homeless, not giving me a Popsicle when it was hot like it's been wouldn't have made me not homeless."

The Quality of Life team works in conjunction with other efforts that aim to turn around the lives of the homeless, including a homeless access center also located at Seccombe Lake Park.

All of it is part of an approach that helps both the homeless and the city at large, according to Councilwoman

Virginia Marquez, an advocate on homeless issues who also represents the downtown area that includes Seccome Lake.

"People want to help, but they need to know that by dropping off food and other things at the park, they're not helping," Marquez said in an earlier interview. "I do think we will end homelessness in the city, working with partners at the county and elsewhere. ... We also need to be smart about it."

Many long-term homeless say they would love to return to the life they once led, but that the city's approach only makes it harder.

"I could get a job at McDonald's and start saving money," said Robin Mungerson, 56, who said she's been homeless since taking a bad loan about 10 years ago. "But what about Anna (her dog)? What about my stuff? It's not safe if I leave it here." Mungerson said she and her husband have lived at Seccombe Lake about two years, since moving out of a friend's backyard.

She's been pushed out of the park a few times recently, she said, but she doesn't know what to do except come back.

And, without prompting, she said she understands what the city wants.

"Police want us out of sight, so people can use this park," she said. "But when (visitors) do come, there isn't any fresh water. There isn't anywhere to use the bathroom. How could anyone visit this park?"

Councilman Jim Mulvihill also zeroed in on the bathroom issue in response to those saying a more sympathetic approach to homelessness was needed.

"We do a lot to help the homeless," he said. "Parks are meant to visit, not to live in or defecate in."

Only one group at the 44-acre park Tuesday morning appeared to be visiting, but they said the homeless people there weren't a concern.

"It's a pretty nice park, as nice as anything else," said Paola Miranda, 17, of Los Angeles, in town for the day with her family. "It's not too different from home."

Behind her, a man sang a version of Zac Brown Band's "Whatever It Is." Miranda smiled.

Quoting the song, she said, "He's got whatever it is."

Inland cities consider regulating marijuana dispensaries

By The Editorial Board, San Bernardino County Sun

Tuesday, June 28, 2016



With the certainty of a politically viable marijuana legalization measure on the November ballot, Inland cities are increasingly finding themselves in a position where it is no longer feasible to continue ignoring the issue. In recent months, there have been indications that a number of cities are contemplating regulation, including Banning and San Bernardino, while voters in Perris and Upland are set to vote on the matter in November.

Marijuana use, for medicinal and recreational purposes, has persisted despite the best efforts of local, state and federal drug control policies. If anything has been accomplished by decades of prohibition, it is the enrichment of the black market. Recognizing this, a handful of Inland cities have had the foresight to set aside any moral qualms about marijuana use and have developed reasonable regulations with respect to dispensaries and even cultivation.

In 2008, Palm Springs led the way by establishing rules for medical marijuana dispensaries, and in 2013 approved lucrative taxes on those dispensaries. In recent years, cities like Adelanto, Cathedral City and Desert Hot Springs have followed suit and have gone a step further in developing regulations for large-scale medical marijuana

cultivation.

To date, there has been no evidence that such moves have undermined the public safety, health and well-being of people living in those communities. Palm Springs has seen steep declines in illegal dispensaries, revenues in excess of one million dollars and has yet to see any of the fears of prohibitionists come to reality.

The city of San Bernardino's legislative review committee has held discussions on the possibility of lifting the city's ban, while the California Cannabis Coalition has submitted signatures in the city for a potential November ballot measure authorizing dispensaries. Considering the amount of money the city has spent chasing down dispensaries, it certainly makes sense to consider bringing the market above ground and generating some revenues from it.

Meanwhile, the Perris City Council voted recently to place measures on the ballot giving voters the choice to tax and regulate marijuana dispensaries in the city. An initiative is also on the ballot in Upland, after much legal wrangling with the Cannabis Coalition. The Banning City council has publicly discussed the possibility of regulating marijuana cultivation for the sake of revenue generation, and is studying the issue.

We hope more cities at least revisit their marijuana policies. Doing so effectively means setting aside any moral judgments about the issue and carefully weighing the pros and cons of prohibition and regulation.

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

LA County extends ban on growing medical marijuana in unincorporated areas

LA County extends ban on growing medical marijuana in unincorporated areas

By Susan Abram, Los Angeles Daily News

Tuesday, June 28, 2016



Proponents of medical marijuana were left disappointed Tuesday after the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to ban cultivating cannabis in unincorporated areas of the county for a year.

Wearing bright green T-shirts and ribbons, dozens of people in support of medical marijuana -- some from as far away as Lancaster — spoke out against the ordinance that bans the cultivation, manufacturing, laboratory testing and distribution of medical marijuana.

Most supporters said continuing a prohibition on safe marijuana growth would criminalize sick people who rely on cannabis to soothe everything from depression to the side-effects of cancer treatments.

“Bans don’t work,” said Kathleen Villarreal, with the pro-medical marijuana group Patient Coalition Los Angeles. “It’ll be grown illegally and sold into the black market. We want the industry to be regulated, to have marijuana be tested and safe.”

Still, the board voted 4 to 1 — with Supervisor Sheila Kuehl dissenting — to extend the ban so that zoning officials could continue to examine the impacts on residents and communities across the county. Water usage and pesticides are among the impacts being studied.

The ban is wedged between two significant events in the Golden State involving cannabis. Last year, Gov. Jerry Brown enacted the [Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act](#), a trio of bills regulating California’s medical marijuana industry at the state level. The formal state licensing process is expected to begin in 2018, but Los Angeles County residents were eager to jump into cultivating cannabis, prompting the Board of Supervisors to vote in April on a 45-day ban to sort out zoning issues.

This November, California voters will get to choose if recreational marijuana use should be legalized.

Members of the [Whittier Boulevard Merchants Association and the East Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce](#) asked the board to continue the Los Angeles County ban, saying their areas had been inundated with questionable marijuana dispensaries. Those from the group Rethink Access to Marijuana, which works with youth, also said pot is too easy for children and teens to obtain.

Before voting against the ban, [Kuehl](#) said she was concerned about several issues. What happens to the ban, she asked, if voters approve recreational marijuana use in November? She and Supervisor [Mark Ridley-Thomas](#) also questioned how the ban would affect taxing the local industry in the future.

“The appetite in the past is to continue the ban until we see what the voters will do in California,” Kuehl said. “There are several pieces to this. I would like our county counsel on this to be ready for a set of proposed regulations that would go into effect the day that voters adopt anything.”

The board instructed county officials to return in two weeks with answers to those questions.

Meanwhile, those who want safe and legal access to marijuana said they were not surprised by the board's vote. Still, Sarah Armstrong, director of industry affairs for [Americans for Safe Access](#), said the group was encouraged by the board's questions.

"We're hopeful the county will regulate safe access in a fashion that serves the needs of patients and leaves the general public unaffected," Armstrong said.

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/health/20160628/la-county-extends-ban-on-growing-medical-marijuana-in-unincorporated-areas>

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Recreational marijuana makes California's fall ballot



File: Marijuana plants grow on the grounds of the Bob Marley Museum in Kingston, Jamaica. Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

California voters will decide in November whether to legal recreational marijuana.

Secretary of State Alex Padilla said Tuesday that initiative proponents turned in more than the 366,000 signatures needed to qualify for the ballot.

A successful vote in California would mean one in every six Americans lives in a state with legal marijuana sales, including the entire West Coast.

The measure asks voters to approve allowing people 21 and older to buy an ounce of marijuana and marijuana-infused products at licensed retail outlets and also grow up to six pot plants for personal recreational use.

State officials estimate the measure would raise as much as \$1 billion per year in revenue and reduce public safety costs by tens of millions.

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O.C. deputies didn't search construction workers, instructors before jailbreak, violating policy

BY TONY SAAVEDRA and JORDAN GRAHAM

2016-06-28 19:22:04



Sheriff's deputies failed to search construction workers and school instructors working inside Orange County Jail [prior to the Jan. 22 escape of three dangerous inmates](#).

A sheriff's commander also told county officials Tuesday that jailers did nothing to inventory potentially dangerous or useful tools being carried into the jail, or to make sure that the tools left with workers, even after sharp cutting blades were left behind on two occasions near inmate housing areas prior to the escape.

The failure to search workers going into the jail violated department policy.

The revelations came while Sheriff's Custody Operations Commander Jon Briggs explained new security measures the department is taking in the aftermath of the embarrassing escape and week-long manhunt. [One volunteer English instructor was detained during the hunt](#) on suspicion of providing a map to the escapees, but not charged with any crime.

Questions remain about how inmates Hossein Nayeri, Jonathan Tieu and Bac Tien Duong obtained the tools that allowed them to remove a metal grate, cut through iron bars and shimmy up the inside of a wall to the roof - steps they took before they used tied bedsheets to lower themselves to the street. Their escape went undiscovered for 15 hours.

Sheriff's Lt. Mark Stichter said the department had a policy of searching contractors going in and out of the jail, and that the policy has been enforced since the escape.

"It was a performance issue," Stichter said. "We took a hard look at that from the very beginning and made a swift correction."

Supervisor Todd Spitzer insisted that the policy requiring jailers to search workers be written into a contract approved Tuesday with Rancho Santiago Community College District, which provides instructors for the jail.

Spitzer said he was surprised the searches were not being done.

"I was flabbergasted and disgusted. For the first time, today, we know that workers who had sharp instruments were not searched before going in or coming out prior to the escape... This is really disturbing information," Spitzer said.

He added that it's possible the policy still isn't being followed.

"In the last month, I have heard from some of the civilians who work in the jail that they are not being searched on a regular basis, and I reported that to the (Sheriff Sandra Hutchens) myself," Spitzer said.

"So this really causes me concern... I'm getting the distinct impression that they do not have a systematic set of procedures in place."

Sheriff spokesman Stichter said he's not aware "of any of that information" coming from Spitzer.

Tom Dominguez, president of the union that represents sheriff's deputies, said Tuesday he also believes there are holes in the safety net.

"It is our understanding that sworn staffing at the Central Men's Jail continues to be woefully inadequate, and that only a fraction of the other safety concerns have been corrected.

"This is an issue in how the jail is managed, not how individual deputies do their jobs."

In February, his union, [the Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriff's, cited alleged gaps in security](#) as a reason to file a lawsuit against the department, seeking help in fixing the problems.

The escape occurred on the first night of a staff reduction. Other potentially contributing factors included a jail death and a fistfight among inmates.

Dominguez said in February that deputies have expressed concerns to superiors about jail safety issues for years.

"This is about the safety of our members, the jail staff, the inmates and ultimately the public we are sworn to protect."

Contact the writer: tzaavedra@ocregister.com

LA County cooling centers could heat up during power outages

Almost none of Los Angeles County's cooling centers have backup power to keep the air conditioning running during the rolling electrical outages expected this summer, officials told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

Energy officials have been predicting the L.A. Basin could use rolling power blackouts to stretch the electrical supply for as many as 14 days this summer. The continuing shutdown of a large underground natural gas reservoir near Porter Ranch, following a large gas leak, could leave some power generation plants short of fuel. California state rules permit natural gas supplies to power plants to be curtailed during shortages — leading to potential outages.

Most of [L.A. County's 95 cooling centers](#) lack backup generators to keep the AC on during an outage.

"We only have two of our cooling centers that have standby power in place, so that's a problem," L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis said Tuesday. She was responding to a report from emergency management officials about their preparedness for rolling outages.

"We need to do more with respect to our cooling centers, especially in the [community and senior services] facilities where we have seniors," she said.

The county's 95 cooling centers are located within the service areas of 13 power utilities in both unincorporated territory and within many of the county's dozens of cities.

The county is likely to know a day in advance which areas might be scheduled for power outages. The outages are designed to last one hour at a time within Southern California Edison service area, or two hours in the L.A. Department of Water and Power's territory.

Because not all areas would have rolling power outages at the same time, the county could move people around on buses to the cooling centers that have power.

Reeb said most of the public buildings designated as cool zones were not required to be designed with the right electrical connections to accept a backup generator. That's because they are non-essential county buildings, such as libraries and community centers. The building code requires backup power hookups only for county buildings deemed essential, such as police, fire and medical buildings.

The county designated its plan for cooling centers in its adverse weather plan approved in 2013, Reeb said. County officials are working in collaboration with other agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, to improve the power reliability of public buildings in case of earthquakes or power outages.

The situation is different for [cooling centers in the city of L.A.](#), said Kate Hutton, spokeswoman for the city Office of Emergency Management. Any city building that has air conditioning can be used as a cooling center. The city also has backup power systems or generators available to keep most of the buildings cool, she said, and it

extends the hours some public buildings are open during heat waves.

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LOCAL / L.A. Now

Poorly performing L.A. sheriff's deputies are not weeded out in their first year, report says



Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department recruits grimace in pain on the first day of training, known as "Black Monday." (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

By **Cindy Chang**

JUNE 29, 2016, 5:00 AM

New sheriff's deputies who perform poorly on the job during their first year are not being weeded out, leaving them to potentially cause problems years down the road in life-or-death situations, according to a [report](#) by the [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's](#) inspector general.

Of 334 trainees who graduated from the sheriff's academy in 2014, none were dismissed for performance-related reasons during their yearlong probationary period working in the county jails. Among them was a deputy who supervisors concluded was "not taking his position ... seriously" and whose "integrity is a major concern," the report said.

In a sampling of trainees, most did not receive their evaluations on time and were promoted to regular status without any meaningful assessment of their performance, according to the report.

Many performance evaluations were filled with the same boilerplate language, cut-and-pasted word for word, sometimes with the wrong gender pronouns or references to a generic "Deputy Doe." One review appeared to have been filled out before the time period the deputy was evaluated.

"She has at times appeared to be tentative in her communication with inmates, and her training officer and supervisors continue to work with her to build confidence in this regard," review after review stated.

Letting go of problem recruits is important because deputies are protected by civil service rules once their one-year probationary term ends, and it is significantly harder to fire them.

The Sheriff's Department has a history of hiring some [deputies with checkered pasts](#), and misconduct has been a recurring issue, especially in the jails, where deputies begin their careers before moving on to street patrol assignments.

In recent years, criminal prosecutions have extended to the department's highest echelons, with former Undersheriff [Paul Tanaka sentenced Monday](#) to five years in federal prison and former Sheriff [Lee Baca soon to be sentenced](#) in a federal obstruction-of-justice case.

"In order to have a fully effective hiring process, the department must conduct meaningful evaluations of its probationary employees or run the risk of repeating the mistakes of previous large-scale recruiting drives," the report said.

In 2010, the Sheriff's Department hired nearly 300 officers from a little-known county police force, including [some who had accidentally fired their weapons](#), had sex at work and solicited prostitutes. Nearly 100 had issues with dishonesty, including lying or falsifying police records, according to records review by The Times.

Baca also maintained a [special hiring program](#) that granted preferential treatment to the friends and relatives of department officials, including some candidates who were given jobs despite having troubled histories.

More recently, sheriff's officials have said they will not relax hiring standards in the face of a severe staffing shortage that has many deputies working mandatory overtime.

But the scrutiny should not stop after new deputies graduate from the academy, Inspector General Max Huntsman said.

"It's about making sure we get it right – it's not just about putting as many bodies out there as possible," Huntsman said in an interview.

Huntsman's report, released Tuesday, is the first to make use of his access to personnel records, which was approved in December after lengthy negotiations with the county, the department and the union that represents deputies. In late 2013, the Office of the Inspector General replaced a previous watchdog system that involved three different offices.

The Sheriff's Department had previously been warned about problems with probationary evaluations, the inspector general's report noted.

“

It's about making sure we get it right – it's not just about putting as many bodies out there as possible.

— Inspector General Max Huntsman

In 2009, the Office of Independent Review told the department to get rid of rookies who exhibited troublesome behavior or risk further incidents in the future.

In its [landmark 2012 report](#), the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence stated that new deputies needed to be rigorously assessed.

In a written response to the inspector general's report, Sheriff Jim McDonnell acknowledged that the performance evaluations were not detailed enough and promised to tighten standards.

But he said that staffing constraints will prevent him from implementing some of the report's recommendations, such as keeping the same training officer with the same deputy for an entire year.

He noted that only 4% of deputy applicants make it to the sheriff's academy and 20% of them drop out before graduation. By the time successful recruits start work as deputies, McDonnell said, the department has invested a lot of time and money in them, and they have been “thoroughly vetted.”

“Because of this investment,” McDonnell wrote, “the department takes great efforts to ensure that those who can competently complete the training process are afforded every opportunity to succeed.”

ALSO

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[Science](#) / [Science Now](#)

Two new vaccines can protect against Zika after a single shot



The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito can transmit the Zika virus. (Felipe Dana / Associated Press)

By **Melissa Healy**

JUNE 28, 2016, 3:42 PM

Just five months after the Zika virus was declared a global public health emergency, a scientific team's feverish efforts to create a vaccine against the viral threat have borne promising fruit: With a single shot of either of two different types of vaccine, experimental mice gained near-total immunity to Zika for at least two months.

Writing in the journal *Nature* on Tuesday, a U.S.-Brazilian team of scientists [reported](#) that two distinct vaccine candidates conferred powerful protection from Zika infection when each was delivered by intra-muscular injection to mice.

“We were very surprised — and quite impressed — that a single shot of either of these vaccines provided complete protection,” said study co-author Dr. Dan H. Barouch, who after years of work on vaccines against HIV pivoted in late January to work on Zika.

“Of course, we need to be cautious about extrapolating” from a study that has so far only shown success in mice, said Barouch, who directs vaccine research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

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But several of the study’s findings “certainly raise optimism that the development of a safe and effective vaccine against Zika virus for humans may be successful,” he added.

The Zika vaccine effort is a race against time. Since its arrival in Brazil in 2013, the Zika virus has marched steadily north. Carried by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the virus is already spreading vigorously in Puerto Rico and is expected to circulate inside the continental United States this summer.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [concluded](#) that Zika infection in pregnant women can cause grievous brain abnormalities in the infants they bear. For those who are not pregnant, Zika infection is generally not dangerous. But in rare cases, it can cause [Guillain-Barre syndrome](#), a life-threatening condition in which the immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system, causing partial paralysis that is generally temporary.

The Boston-based team also discerned how the tested vaccines worked to provide protection — an important milestone in building a vaccine. Soon after their first shot of either vaccine, the immune systems of lab mice quickly mobilized an army of circulating antibodies that recognized and attacked Zika virus as soon as it began replicating.

Such “antibody protection,” produced by the immune system’s B-cells, is not generally as enduring as the long-term immune memory produced by T-cells. But “it’s good: it makes a vaccine that’s nice and neat and simple,” said [Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Fauci called the vaccine candidates’ early success “an important step on the road to getting vaccines into humans.” He confirmed that several other Zika vaccine candidates are being tested in animals, and that very early testing in humans could begin as early as late August.

The two vaccine candidates described in Nature represent two very different approaches to training the immune system’s killing power on the Zika virus. One takes the whole of a single Zika virus, inactivates it by removing the machinery that makes it replicate, and shows it to the immune system.

The other candidate, a so-called DNA vaccine, shows the immune system only the distinctive outer sheath of the Zika virus in a bid to prompt attacks on anything enclosed in such an envelope.

“

Some call them vaccines of the future.

— Dr. Dan H. Barouch, study co-author

Both approaches worked in several different strains of laboratory mice. But while “inactivated virus” vaccines are already in wide use, DNA vaccines, have never been approved for use in humans in the United States.

“Some call them vaccines of the future,” said Barouch of the DNA vaccines. Whether they lend themselves to large-scale production and distribution remains unclear, he said. “But they do have a variety of ... technological advantages compared to the traditional approaches” — not least that vaccine designers can make rapid changes in the mix of puzzle pieces shown to the immune system.

Given the uncertainties of developing vaccines for emergency use, “a diversity of approaches is always beneficial,” he added.

Indeed, at least one other vaccine candidate — a DNA vaccine designed by the drugmaker Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc. of Pennsylvania — is also moving toward clinical trials in humans. Last week, Inovio said it had received the go-ahead from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to test a synthetic vaccine called GLS-5700 that it said “induced robust antibody and T-cell responses in small and large animal models.”

The company has not published the results of its tests, but it expects to begin a clinical trial with 40 healthy subjects “within weeks,” said company spokesman Bernie Hertel.

In the experiments reported in *Nature*, the mice cleared Zika virus from their bloodstreams even when their army of antibodies was “relatively modest,” Barouch said. With an additional booster shot or two, he said the experimental vaccines could prompt an immune response a hundred times as strong, if needed.

One other factor should prompt optimism that this early success might lead to a timely vaccine, said Barouch: Immunologists have had success in building vaccines against viruses in the same family as Zika, including those that cause yellow fever, dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis.

In a related development [reported](#) Tuesday in the journal *Nature Communications*, scientists concluded that macaque monkeys, which have become a mainstay of nonhuman primate research with the diminishing use of chimpanzees, respond to Zika virus infection in ways that strongly mimic humans’ reactions.

That finding means scientists will have a highly reliable stand-in for testing the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and other new therapies against Zika before they are administered to humans. The ability to use macaques to approximate a human’s response to the two vaccine candidates already tested, as well as to test other vaccines under development, will be key to speeding the development of such medications.

Still, many hurdles remain.

Among the challenges for a Zika vaccine, says Mayo Clinic immunologist Dr. Gregory Poland, is that it will likely be used to protect diverse populations with very different risks, and must be found acceptably safe in all.

A vaccine that is safe for younger women — who could be pregnant or become pregnant — may not be the same as a vaccine that protects older patients, who are at greatest risk of developing Guillain-Barre syndrome

following infection, said Poland. As testing proceeds, he added, researchers and regulators will also have to find a vaccine safe for use in populations that span the spectrum of age, gender, ethnicity and medical history.

“Under the normal course of events, it could take years,” said Poland. “There’s just a whole lot of complexity here.”

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UPDATES:

3:42 p.m.: This article was updated with additional information about Inovio Pharmaceuticals’ plans for a clinic trial.

2:53 p.m.: This article was updated with Inovio Pharmaceuticals’ announcement that it had received FDA approval to begin tests of a synthetic Zika vaccine, GLS-5700.

This article was originally published at 11:06 a.m.

For The Record

JUN. 28, 2016, 3:41 PM

An earlier version of this article incorrectly said Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc. was based in South Korea. It is in Pennsylvania.

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How many doctors at your hospital take drug makers' money?

Where a hospital is located and who owns it make a big difference in how many of its doctors take meals, consulting and promotional payments from pharmaceutical and medical device companies, a new ProPublica analysis shows.

A higher percentage of doctors at [hospitals in the South](#) have received such payments than doctors in other regions of the country, our analysis found. And a greater share of doctors at for-profit hospitals have taken them than at nonprofit and government facilities.

Doctors in New Jersey, home to many of the largest drug companies, led the country in industry interactions: Nearly eight in 10 doctors working at New Jersey hospitals took payments in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available. Nationally, the rate was 66 percent. ([Look up your hospital using our new tool.](#))

For the past six years, ProPublica has tracked industry payments to doctors, finding that [some earn hundreds of thousands of dollars](#) or more each year working with drug and device companies. We've reported how the drugs [most aggressively promoted](#) to doctors typically aren't cures or even big medical breakthroughs.

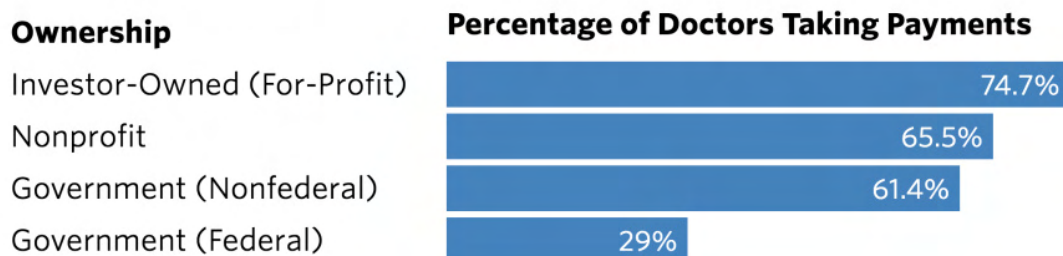
And we recently [found an association](#) between payments and higher rates of brand-name prescribing, on average. Accepting even one inexpensive meal from a company was associated with a higher rate of prescribing the product to which the meal was linked, [another study showed](#).

This analysis shows profound differences among hospitals, but it's uncertain why that is. It could be that hospitals play a role in shaping affiliated doctors' acceptance of payments or that like-minded physicians congregate at particular hospitals.

Those who support limits on such payments say patients may want to know how prevalent industry money is at a hospital before choosing it for care. "Maybe they're prescribing or treating you as a patient not based on evidence but rather based on markets or industry gain or personal gain," said Dr. Kelly Thibert, president of the American Medical Student Association, which grades medical schools and teaching hospitals on their conflict-of-interest policies. Patients, she said, "need to be aware that this could potentially be an issue and they need to speak up for themselves and their loved ones who may be in those hospitals."

At For-Profit Hospitals, Doctors More Likely To Take Pharma Payments

A hospital's ownership makes a difference in what proportion of its doctors take payments from pharmaceutical and medical device companies.



Source: ProPublica analysis; American Hospital Association; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Note: 115 out of 4,815 hospitals had an unknown ownership type; hospitals operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are not included in the federal tally.

ProPublica matched data on [company payments to physicians in 2014](#) with data kept by Medicare on the [hospitals with which physicians were affiliated](#) at the time. We only looked at each doctor's primary hospital affiliation and only at doctors eligible to receive payments in the 100 most common medical specialties. The payments included speaking, consulting, meals, travel, gifts and royalties, but not research.

To be sure, the data is not perfect. Companies must report their payments to the federal government, and some doctors have found errors in what's been attributed to them. Companies can face fines for errors, and doctors have a chance each year to contest information reported about them. Also, Medicare's physician data may not capture doctors who do not participate in the program and it may not accurately reflect the status of doctors who have moved. ([Read more about how we conducted our analysis.](#))

As might be expected, hospitals with tougher rules, such as banning industry reps from walking their halls and bringing lunch, tended to have lower payments rates. For example, at [Kaiser Permanente](#), a giant California-based health insurer that runs 38 hospitals, fewer than three in 10 doctors took a payment in 2014. Since 2004, the system has banned staff from taking anything of value from a vendor.

"Our intent was to disrupt the strategy of using what industry calls 'food, friendship and flattery' to develop relationships with prescribers and influence the choice of drugs, the choice of devices, implants, things like that," said Dr. Sharon Levine, an executive vice president of the Permanente Federation, which represents the doctor arm of Kaiser Permanente. "Passing a policy alone doesn't make anything happen. There's a fair amount of surround-sound in the organization around reminding people about this and reminding them why we took this step."

Levine said she believes many of the payments attributed to Kaiser doctors were for meals and snacks at professional meetings, even if they didn't eat them.

ProPublica's analysis found distinct regional differences in comparing where industry payments were most concentrated.

After New Jersey, the states with the highest rates of hospital-affiliated doctors taking payments were all in the South: Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, South Carolina and Alabama had rates above 76 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, Vermont had the lowest rate of industry interactions (19 percent), followed by Minnesota (30 percent). Maine, Wisconsin and Massachusetts had rates below 46 percent. Some of these states had laws requiring public disclosure of payments to doctors that predated the federal government's.

There were also major differences between hospitals based upon who owned them. For-profit hospitals had the highest rate of payments to doctors, 75 percent, followed by nonprofit hospitals at 66 percent. Federally owned hospitals had the lowest rates at 29 percent, followed by other government hospitals at 61 percent. Hospitals operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs were not included in our analysis.

Among hospitals with at least 50 affiliated doctors, the one with the highest proportion of doctors taking payments was St. Francis Hospital-Bartlett, a relatively small hospital outside Memphis that is owned by Tenet Healthcare Corp. Fifty-nine of the 62 doctors for which Medicare listed St. Francis as their primary affiliation took payments in 2014, a rate of 95 percent.

In a statement, the hospital said it supported disclosure and transparency: "Patients should have the ability to access information about any relationship that might exist between their doctor and the companies that make the products that might be recommended for their care, so that they can discuss that information directly with their physician." Spokesman Derek Venckus declined to answer other questions about the hospital's rate or its policies.

Overall, our analysis showed, the percentage of doctors taking payments at a given hospital wasn't correlated with the share of its doctors receiving larger payments, those totaling \$5,000 or more. (In part that may be because so few doctors received more than \$5,000.)

Some hospitals had a relatively low proportion of doctors taking payments but a relatively high share of doctors taking substantial amounts of money. In these cases, experts say, the hospitals are probably banning meals and gifts while permitting or encouraging deeper relationships, often with oversight.

At Karmanos Cancer Center in Detroit, more than a quarter of doctors took more than \$5,000 from industry in 2014, the highest rate in the nation. Spokeswoman Patricia Ellis said in an email that the hospital has conflict-of-interest policies in place and is comfortable with its level of physician interactions.

"Our cancer experts are committed to providing exceptional care and work tirelessly to find/discover/advance innovative treatments that can help patients survive their cancer," she wrote. "I lost both my parents and several other loved ones to cancer. ...I know our experts at Karmanos Cancer Institute are doing everything they can to help other cancer patients have more time with their loved ones. And they're doing that with the highest integrity and commitment."

Many cancer hospitals and specialty hospitals, including heart and orthopedic facilities, had among the highest rates of doctors receiving high-dollar payments.

Researchers as well as officials at the Association of American Medical Colleges, a trade group for medical schools and teaching hospitals, said they had not analyzed the data the way ProPublica has. But officials said members do track payments made to doctors at their own institutions.

Across the country, hospital and medical school leaders are divided about what constitutes an appropriate payment. "There is a range of opinions between those people who believe that industry payments should be cut out vs. those who believe that there's a way to carefully monitor them," said Dr. Janis Orlowski, the association's chief health care officer.

ProPublica found differences in the payment rates at teaching hospitals based on [the grades assigned to them](#) by the American Medical Student Association, which reviewed their conflict-of-interest policies in 2014.

At the "A" hospitals we analyzed, 46 percent of doctors took a payment, compared to 48 percent at "B" hospitals, 58 percent at "C" hospitals and 63 percent at hospitals rated as incomplete because their policies were "insufficient for evaluation." By comparison, 69 percent of doctors at unrated hospitals took payments. Of the 204 hospitals graded, about 150 were in ProPublica's data (hospitals run by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs were not).

"I think that's significant," said Thibert, the group's president. "That's still a lot of docs receiving money unfortunately. That's something we're continuing to work on."

The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics received an A on the scorecard. Its rate of doctors taking payments, less than 27 percent, is among the lowest in the country. Less than 3 percent of its doctors took payments worth at least \$5,000, also below average. Its policy, [in place since 2009](#), bans drug company from providing gifts and meals in almost all circumstances, bans doctors from giving promotional talks, and requires consulting arrangements be signed off on by officials.

"We really have had great success in getting [physicians] to comply with it," said Denise Krutzfeldt, manager of the health system's conflict of interest office.

Other hospitals with below-average rates, including Massachusetts General Hospital and Stanford Hospital, limit interactions between doctors and pharmaceutical representatives and monitor doctor interactions with industry closely, officials said. Some post details of their doctors' commercial relationships on their websites.

In interviews, some said they double-checked their physicians' disclosures against the data reported by the companies.

"It's like stop signs. Everybody knows they're supposed to stop at stop signs but as you and I both know, people seem to cruise through them from time to time," said Dr. Henry Greenberg, senior associate dean for research at Stanford Medicine. "That's just human nature. We have a system we try to pick it up and do corrective action."

Deputy data editor Olga Pierce contributed to this report.

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